

## Warden Message – U.S. Embassy, Quito, Ecuador

### Increase in Number of Express Kidnappings in Quito

September 21, 2010

The U.S. Embassy in Quito wishes to inform American citizens visiting or residing in Ecuador that the U.S. Embassy has seen a rise in the number of "express" kidnappings – in which the victim is temporarily held and robbed or forced to withdraw funds from area ATMs or make withdrawals from local banks – in Quito. The increase in these crimes has been seen specifically at night in the Mariscal District, a popular tourist area located between Colon and Patria Avenues, just west of 6 de Diciembre. While the majority of express kidnappings in Ecuador have been reported in Guayaquil, more reports are coming from Quito. A new tactic emerging is the use of pepper spray in the eyes to further incapacitate and gain compliance from victims. Almost all of these crimes involve illegitimate taxis and complicit taxi drivers.

The U.S. Embassy recommends that American citizens take caution when hailing taxis directly off the street. People are advised to call a taxi dispatcher directly so there is a record of who is picking them up. If they have to choose a taxi from a queue, pay special attention to signs that indicate the taxi is legitimate. This includes checking to make sure that the cab is in good physical condition, and that it has orange license plates as well as an orange placard on the driver's-side doors and windshield with the registration number.

The security office of the U.S. Embassy encourages all American citizens to practice sound personal security at all times. Criminals in Quito routinely utilize the threat of force while carrying out criminal activity and resistance to robberies substantially increases the likelihood of violence. If you are a victim of a robbery, in most instances, it is safest to be non-confrontational and give up your valuables. **There is nothing of any material value that is worth more than the personal health and well being of you and your family.** The first step in avoiding a criminal incident is to stay alert at all times and be aware of your environment. Be alert to suspicious persons and/or activity in your neighborhood.

Please see the section on Crime in the [Country Specific Information Sheet](#) on Ecuador for more information on crime in Ecuador. If an American is the victim of a crime, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Quito or Consulate General in Guayaquil immediately.

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Americans living or traveling in Ecuador are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate and to obtain updated information on travel and security within Ecuador through the [Department of State's travel registration website](#).

U.S. citizens should consult the [Country Specific Information](#) for Ecuador and the latest Travel Alerts and Warnings and Worldwide Caution at the [Department's website](#). Updated information on travel and security in Ecuador may also be obtained from the Department of State by calling 1-888-407-4747 within the United States or by calling 1-202-501-4444 outside the United States.

The U.S. Embassy in Quito is located at Avigiras E12-170 y Eloy Alfaro. The telephone number for American Citizen Service (ACS) inquiries is (011 593-2) 398-5000. Within the same city use the last seven digits. Add the city code for intercity telephone calls. Public call-in hours are Monday through Thursday 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. and Friday 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. Appointments for ACS are available through our [website](#).

The [U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil](#) is located at the corner of Avenida 9 de Octubre and Garcia Moreno (near the Hotel Oro Verde); telephone (011-593-4) 232-3570 during business hours, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or 232-1152 for after-hours emergencies.

Anyone can follow the activities of the U.S. Embassy in Ecuador through the [Embassy web site](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).